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ABSTRACT

This paper provides an overview of the research base on the influence of schools, families, and communities on the learning and educational resilience of children in at-risk circumstances, as well as illustrations of current policies and programmatic approaches that place health development and educational success as integral components of community revitalization. Implications for policy and practice are also discussed. Several policy and practical implications can be drawn from current attempts to institute broad-based efforts to improve the development and learning success of inner-city children and youth. First, program implementation must be a shared responsibility of all stakeholder groups at the grassroots level. Schools, however, must be the primary focus in attempting to improve urban education. Second, innovative programs evolve in stages of development, growth, and change. Programs that are useful in one city may be helpful in initiating similar programs elsewhere. Finally, it is noted that few educational reforms have generated the same level of support as the comprehensive approach to coordinated educational and related services for children as a focus for achieving significant improvements in student learning. More information is needed about program features, implementation, and evidence of effects. Educational reform and the reform of services delivery have been on somewhat separate tracks, but to ensure the long-lasting impact of collaborative programs, schools and other collaborating agencies must be committed to using powerful instructional techniques as an essential and active component. (Contains 4 tables, 1 figure, and 56 references.) (SLD)

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The research reported herein was supported in part by the National Center on Education in the Inner Cities at the Temple University Center for Research in Human Development and Education (CRHDE), and in part by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) of the U.S. Department of Education through a contract to the Laboratory for Student Success (LSS) established at CRHDE. The opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect the position of the supporting agencies, and no official endorsement should be inferred.

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Revitalizing Inner Cities:
Focusing on Children's Learning

Margaret C. Wang, Geneva D. Haertel, and Herbert J. Walberg

There is national recognition of the urgent needs of children and youth in highly economically and educationally disadvantaged communities. Policymakers, educators, related service providers, parents, and community members have all put forth significant efforts to address the needs of children and families in the inner cities and isolated rural communities. The economic transition from manufacturing to service sector jobs, the shift in demographics creating increasing diversity, an overall deterioration of the urban infrastructure, the growing numbers of families living in poverty, and inadequate and fragmented social services delivery place seemingly insurmountable burdens on many urban families, particularly in the most inner of the inner cities. Schools, neighborhood organizations, businesses, churches, health care providers, and other government agencies are among the institutions that must undergo major rethinking and restructuring in a broad-based coordinated effort to better meet the diverse needs of urban families.

Schools have been and should continue to be the primary focus in efforts to significantly improve the capacity for educational success of our nation's children and youth. Surely other efforts will come to naught if we fail to offer powerful forms of education in schools. Nevertheless, rich learning occurs not only in schools, but also in a multitude of settings: storytelling and family reading together at home; exploring math and science through an exhibition at a local museum; learning about people and geography through an after-school program in the neighborhood library; interning at a local business; and participating in community service programs serving local residents.

Cities, too, provide a wealth of resources for extracurricular learning. Despite the difficulties of urban life, cities also contain many rich and promising resources for children and families. Much of what is known from research and innovative applications of what we know that works can be culled to overcome adversity (Wang & Gordon, 1994). If only we can find the means of magnifying the "positives" in urban life, we can rekindle hope for the schooling success of all of the diverse students schools today are challenged to serve, particularly those who, for a variety of reasons, live in circumstances that place them at risk of school failure or leaving school unprepared for work or further learning. The challenge is twofold: first, to forge school-family-community collaborations that can better serve the development and learning

needs of children and youth in circumstances that place them at risk; and second, to identify and implement effective practices and policies that meet the diverse needs of students who are in circumstances that place them at risk of school failure to ensure healthy development and learning success of every student.

This paper provides an overview of the research base on the influences of schools, families, and communities on the learning and educational resilience of children in at-risk circumstances; illustrations of current policies and programmatic approaches that place healthy development and educational success as an integral component of community revitalization efforts; and a discussion of implications for practice and policy improvements.

The Research Base

An extensive research base shows what influences learning and reveals practices that promote healthy development among children and youth who live in high-risk circumstances. An overview of this research base is briefly summarized in the following section.

What Influences Learning?

Findings from a research synthesis of the past 50 years of educational and psychological research on learning, combined with a large-scale survey of judgments of educational practitioners, policymakers, and researchers, provide substantial consistency in systematic appraisals of what practices, policies, and contexts influence learning (Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1994). Twenty-eight broad-based categories of influences were identified from published research reports and ratings from the survey. Figure 1 provides a summary of the findings by listing the influence categories ranked from most to least influential. The numbers listed on the right represent the average influence score for a given category.

As shown in Figure 1, the most powerful influences are found in the learner, the classroom, and the home. They affect learners directly (i.e., they are the categories with the greatest influence on students' cognitive abilities, motivation, and behavior; classroom management, climate, and student-teacher interactions; amount and type of classroom instruction; and the home environment). The community, teacher-administrator decision making, and out-of-class time show moderate influences on learning. State, district, and school policies, which affect learners indirectly, are among the least influential categories.

The findings shown in Figure 1 suggest that policy, even that which is carefully developed and addresses a significant problem, is unlikely to make a difference in student

learning unless it directly influences classroom instructional practices, home environment, and parental support. Further analysis of the data to determine the relative influence of different contexts on learning revealed similar patterns. As shown in Table 1, contexts such as the classroom (i.e., instructional practices and curriculum), home and community, and schoolwide practices are more powerful influences on learning than state and district policy contexts.

Promoting Educational Resilience

Many children and youth, particularly those in the inner cities, experience a poor quality of life, endure co-occurring risks such as poverty and poor health care, and live in communities with high crime rates and little prospect for employment of family members. Despite these adversities, some children and youth show resilience; they beat the odds and overcome the adversities they face. Resilient children are those who grow into competent, well-educated adults rise above their circumstances to break the cycle of disadvantage.

Resilience is a concept advanced through studies of developmental pathways that mitigate adversities and mechanisms that support recovery from severe life trauma (Garmezy, 1991). Resilience as a psychological construct provides an integrative framework for interpreting individual and institutional resources that can be cultivated and mobilized to mitigate the effects of personal vulnerabilities, risks, and environmental adversities. Resilience is not the product of a single precipitating event, but rather of continuous interaction between an individual and the features of his/her environment. A key premise is that protective mechanisms within the family, classroom, school, and community can foster educational resilience by buffering and reducing the adversities children face, and providing opportunities for learning and healthy development. Homes, classrooms, schools, and communities can be altered to provide features that protect children against adversities, enhance their learning, and develop their talents and competencies.

Bronfenbrenner's (1986) ecological model of healthy child development also provides a clear rationale for establishing links between the school, family, and community contexts. Bronfenbrenner's model specifies that healthy development depends upon children's extended participation in increasingly complex, reciprocal activities with at least one adult devoted to the child's well-being. As the interpersonal interactions increase in complexity, the child advances cognitively and behaviorally. Successful child-rearing also depends on supportive interactions with other individuals who are part of the child's and family's principal contexts: home, school,

and community. These interactions involve exchanges of information, communication, accommodation, and trust.

Bronfenbrenner's model is helpful in understanding how a child's development is affected by detrimental sociocultural circumstances, including impaired parent-child interactions and relationships, conflicting demands between child care and jobs, the instability of daily family life, and increasing divorce rates (Bronfenbrenner & Neville, 1994). Studies of children who thrive despite these disruptive conditions provide evidence of an "immunizing" factor that can mitigate against life's adversities. The immunizing factor, which is also noted in the resilience literature, is the availability of support systems that connect the contexts surrounding the family. Such support systems, with the help of public policies and practices, provide stability, status, belief systems, customs, and actions that support the child-rearing process.

Table 2 presents risk factors and protective features within the contexts of the school, home, and community. Practices within these contexts that facilitate children's learning and educational resilience are highlighted below.

School and Classroom Context

Schools and teachers make a difference in student learning (Edmonds, 1979). Educational resilience can be fostered in classrooms and schools. Although few studies address the role of school, classroom, and teacher as protective mechanisms that promote resilience development in general and educational resilience in particular, research on improving the capacity for education in inner cities (Wang, Freiberg, & Waxman, 1994) suggests a consistent pattern of effective institutional practices and organizational and behavioral patterns in inner-city schools that promote educational resilience. Furthermore, these findings are largely congruent with the extant literature on effective schools. For example, the research showed significant differences between inner-city schools that were more and less effective in promoting achievement. Students in the more effective schools generally spent more time working independently, teachers spent more time interacting with students, and students expressed more positive perceptions about their schools. They were more satisfied with their schoolwork and peer relationships, saw their teachers as having high expectations of them, and had higher aspirations and achievement motivation, as well as better social and academic self-concept. In addition, students in effective inner-city schools felt more involved in school, believed their teachers were more supportive, and felt classroom rules were made clear to them. Similarly, in a study using the NELS:88 database, Peng, Weishew, and Wang (1991) found that inner-city

schools with high achievement scores despite their disadvantaged circumstances were more orderly and structured than low-achieving inner-city schools. Anderson and Walberg (1994) found that higher achieving Chicago schools had high involvement of stakeholder groups and staff capacity for continuous learning.

Teachers. Teachers' beliefs and actions play a central role in promoting student well-being and learning success. With support and guidance from teachers, students develop the values and attitudes needed to persevere in their schoolwork, master new experiences, believe in their own efficacy, and take responsibility for their own learning. Teachers not only transmit knowledge and facilitate learning, but also act as confidants and mentors. They reduce stress while providing support for children facing difficult life circumstances (Werner & Smith, 1982). When close relationships among teachers and students are sustained over time, the students' academic and social endeavors benefit (Lee, Bryk, & Smith, 1993).

Classroom Instruction and Climate. Educational research conducted over the past three decades has identified powerful instructional strategies that consistently produce achievement advantages (Reynolds, 1989; Teddlie & Stringfield, 1993; Wang, et al., 1994). They include:

- Maximized learning time
- Well-managed classroom with clear management and disciplinary rules
- High expectations for all students
- Frequent and cognitively challenging student-teacher academic interactions
- Frequent and sustained student-teacher social interactions
- High degree of student engagement
- Instruction adapted to students' learning needs
- Active teaching of higher order thinking skills
- Use of direct instruction when appropriate
- Student involvement in setting learning goals, monitoring their own progress, and evaluating and refining their work
- Participation in group learning activities

Overall, academically oriented classrooms, well-organized classrooms, and classrooms with a cooperative climate are positively associated with students' cognitive and affective outcomes; classrooms in which students hold shared values, interests, and beliefs, and in which students are more satisfied with classroom life, contribute to more positive climates and enhanced learning for every student.

Curriculum. Student learning is enhanced when the curriculum contains intellectually demanding content, is tailored to diverse learning needs, and is sensitive to the need for connections with the life experience and background of the individual student. This is especially important for children from economically and educationally disadvantaged homes, and students from ethnic and language minority backgrounds who have not fared well under the current system of delivery, and who have been provided little opportunity to learn advanced content and develop higher order thinking skills (Means & Knapp, 1991).

Urban schools, particularly those with a high concentration of students in circumstances that place them at risk of educational failure, invest significant energy and resources to "compensate" for the lack of academic achievement; indeed, many provide a variety of well-intentioned supplementary supports such as placement in Title I, bilingual, and special education programs—unfortunately with little result. Among the most frequently cited reasons for this lack of results is the use of pull-out, remedial, or compensatory approaches to program implementation. These approaches are often disjointed from the mainstream programs and devote little time to exposing students to advanced content or developing their higher order cognitive skills (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 1995; Commission on Chapter 1, 1992). Children's learning is likely to be enhanced when they are exposed to demanding curriculum that is both instructionally powerful and connected with their life experience in culturally sensitive ways. The relevance of curricula within traditional subject areas may be enhanced by content related to students' cultural and familial experiences. The availability of such curricula and programs is resilience-promoting whether delivered at school, at home, or in the community.

Schoolwide Practices. Substantial evidence suggests that fundamental changes in school life, organization, and culture can improve student learning and motivation (Johnson & Johnson, 1995; Lee et al., 1993; Newmann & Wehlage, 1995; Teddlie & Stringfield, 1993). Schoolwide practices that are linked to achievement and psychosocial benefits include:

- Reinforcing academic accomplishments
- Providing public recognition, awards, and incentives for accomplishments
- Creating smaller educational units (e.g., charters, mini-schools)
- Fostering feelings of "belonging" and "involvement" among students and staff
- Establishing effective and responsive instructional programs that promote learning and educational resilience
- Adopting an inclusive approach to address the diverse needs of students with greater-than-usual instructional and service needs

- Guarding instructional time spent on academic tasks
- Implementing well-coordinated academic programs
- Involving parents and communities in school programs
- Establishing a safe, nonviolent school setting
- High level of principal engagement in the academic and social life of the school
- Faculty participation in school decision making

Peer Support. Peer cultures can facilitate learning or conflict with the academic values of schools (Ogbu, 1988; Taylor, Casten, & Flickinger, 1994). Student achievement is a product not only of a child's cognitive ability, but also of school climate, family values and practices, and the social network of peers. After the family, peers are the most important source of support, providing children and adolescents with a sense of being cared about and valued. Peer networks can facilitate development and protect against stress by providing a stable and supportive source of concern. Conversely, they can inhibit positive educational outcomes by pressuring children and youth to engage in misconduct rather than productive educational tasks.

Anderson's (1990) case studies revealed the impact of peers on African-American male youth who were moving between two communities—an economically disadvantaged community and a community becoming middle class through community gentrification. Anderson showed that both groups appropriated the language, attitudes, and behaviors of the prevalent youth culture in their communities. In the economically disadvantaged community, students displayed more defensive physical postures and speech patterns; in the gentrified community, the same youth exhibited more helpful acts in an effort to dispel perceptions of them as engaging in uncivil or criminal activities. Anderson's studies illustrate the responsiveness of youth to the attitudes, aspirations, and behaviors of their peers.

Coleman and Hoffer (1987) described how students in boarding schools are supportive of their friends when their families disengage. Another indication of the influence of peers is the finding that cooperative learning is one of the single most effective school-based interventions for reducing alcohol and drug use (Bangert-Downs, 1988). Similarly, Watt, Moorehead-Slaughter, Japzon, and Keller (1990) provided evidence that children of divorced parents find respite from a stressful home situation in peer networks that provide distance from stressed parents. Children of divorce look to school friends for companionship and care to a greater extent than children from intact homes.

Peers also have a significant impact on students' self-perceived academic competence and attitude toward school. Cauce (1986) found that the peer group's attitude toward school was a significant predictor of grades, achievement test scores, value placed on being a good student, and perceived competence. Similarly, Patchen (1982) found that students with peers who valued high achievement spent more time on homework, finished more of their homework assignments, attended school more regularly, and were less often tardy or absent without permission. Opportunities to interact with students who have high achievement motivation, positive attitudes toward school, and a positive academic self-concept can be beneficial to students who are academically at risk. Mentoring programs, cooperative learning programs, cross-age tutoring, use of small learning groups, and extracurricular activities provide mechanisms for children and youth to develop positive peer relationships and stronger support networks.

The Family Context

Parents and family members are a child's first teachers. They nurture, educate, and act as points of entry to many of society's resources. The family nurtures children's development by providing food, shelter, and protection. They establish social connections to the larger community; provide opportunities to develop competence and achieve mastery in learning; and find ways to create and access a variety of resources to ensure children's healthy development and educational success. Rutter's (1990) research reveals that a positive parent-child relationship, other secure attachments, and family cohesion and warmth protect children against adversity later in life. An organized home environment, infrequent relocations, and marital stability reduce the likelihood that a child will engage in disruptive behaviors. Families that hold high expectations for children, and employ consistent discipline and rules produce better outcomes among children living in high-risk circumstances. In contrast, poor household maintenance and housekeeping are related to disruptiveness in school (Masten, Morison, Pelligrini, & Tellegen, 1990).

The intervention literature suggests that many of the problems students experience cannot be addressed without the direct involvement of the family. Werner and Smith (1982) emphasized the value of assigned chores, caring for brothers and sisters, and the contribution of part-time work in supporting the family. These behaviors show children they can improve their circumstances, which leads to enhanced self-esteem and fosters resilience. Research in family involvement also shows the key role that the family plays in enhancing children's school performance. Educational intervention programs designed to involve family members are

significantly more effective than programs aimed exclusively at students. The active participation of family members in students' learning has improved achievement, increased school attendance, and decreased student dropout, delinquency, and pregnancy rates. Further, parents who participate in family involvement programs generally feel better about themselves and are more likely to advance their own education (Flaxman & Inger, 1991).

Parent involvement programs differ in their focus and design. Some programs involve parents in local governance and "choice;" others strive to improve families' communication and study skills, and stress the value of setting high expectations for children; still others focus on providing access to community resources and may involve home visits, job training, career counseling, health care, mental health, and social support. While all parent involvement programs may promote students' well-being, those programs that incorporate powerful instructional techniques are the most likely to produce learning gains.

The Community Context

In the United States, children spend only about 13% of their time in school during the first 18 years of life (Walberg, 1984). Although this statistic was calculated over a decade ago, it is a reminder of the amount of unstructured time that children have available. The Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development (1992) reported that nearly 40% of adolescents' waking time is unstructured and uncommitted. A substantial research base identifies features of the community that might be exploited directly to influence nonschool learning and indirectly to increase children's classroom learning and motivation.

Health care organizations, child care services, job training providers, religious institutions, and recreational facilities are some of the social organizations that serve human needs (Garmezy, 1991). Communities with well-developed and integrated networks of these organizations have fewer social problems (Yancey & Saporito, 1995). Coordination and cooperation of community institutions promote family health, reduce crime and delinquency, contribute to neighborhood cohesion, and ready children for school.

Communities with high expectations for good citizenship provide protective mechanisms for residents, as shown in studies that explore the importance of cultural norms on student alcohol and drug abuse. Analyzing community-based programs for African-American youth, Nettles (1991) found that school-based clinics are only partially effective in reducing substance abuse. The programs that fostered resilience provided more social support and adult aid, gave

concrete help on tasks, and provided opportunities for students to develop new interests and skills.

Communities with a high concentration of economically disadvantaged families often lack a well-integrated network of social organizations for children and youth. The services provided to impoverished, deteriorating urban communities are often compartmentalized and fragmented (Boyd & Crowson, 1993). In an analysis of the impact of social policies on the quality of human resources available to African-American youth, Swanson and Spencer (1991) emphasized the dual importance of finding ways to reduce risk and making opportunities and resources available to break the adverse chain reactions. Because schools have the most sustained contact with children and their families, educators should consider the potential benefits of coordinating and integrating children's services across school and community organizations when designing school improvement programs (Flaxman & Passow, 1995).

Energetic family and community involvement programs support children's academic efforts, assist families in the development of good parenting skills, and reinforce the values promoted at school. The linkage of family, school, and community resources helps amplify children and youth's sense of nurturance and support. One example is the coordination of school-linked services to provide ready access to medical, psychological, legal, transportation, and social services for students and their families (Rigsby, Reynolds, & Wang, 1995). Although early evaluation results have demonstrated some beneficial outcomes from school-linked services, the early efforts often did not stress powerful instructional techniques in combination with access to the services (Center for the Study of Social Policy, 1995). School-linked programs, if designed with attention to the resources of families, schools, and communities, seem likely to improve the overall quality of life for these students.

Recent Developments: A National Call for Action

The service delivery system currently in place for serving children and families in the United States is fragmented and inadequate for meeting the physical, social, and learning needs of today's children and youth, especially those beset by significant adversities. Clearly, schools alone cannot redress this inadequacy. In this section, we review recent developments that have emerged in response to the pressing need for improvement. We begin by identifying recently enacted federal policies and school-family-community programs that have been advanced as partial solutions. In these responses, schools become partners with families and local communities in an effort to better meet the diverse needs of every student. Several recent, far-

reaching legislative efforts demonstrate Congress' resolve to improve the life circumstances of America's children. Both national policies and programmatic responses have been targeted at meeting the needs of the most vulnerable—a timely nationwide call for action.

Goals 2000: Educate America Act

This bipartisan legislation, signed into law in March of 1994, grew out of concerns raised by the 1983 report, *A Nation at Risk*. This law makes education a national priority, but is designed to better enable states and local communities to tailor educational reform efforts to their specific and unique needs. In addition to specifying eight National Education Goals[1], it stresses the importance of parent and community involvement in schools. The law is perhaps best known for its strong endorsement of improving curriculum content and performance standards for every student, including those requiring greater-than-usual educational and related service support in order to achieve educational success.

Improving America's Schools Act

In October of 1994, Congress affirmed its commitment to the nation's poorest children. By reauthorizing and restructuring the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965—now the Improving America's Schools Act (IASA)—lawmakers mandated community and parental involvement in the schools. Collaborative efforts among schools, communities, and families are to provide the intricate web of support necessary to ensure safe and intellectually enriching environments that bolster students' achievement. The commitment to bring together these institutions to serve the needs of children in high-poverty areas is visible throughout the legislation. Titles I, IV, and XI contain provisions that are relevant to meeting the many needs of students via school-family-community partnerships.

Title I of IASA, *Helping Disadvantaged Children Meet High Standards*, includes new provisions that ask school districts to coordinate and integrate Title I services with other educational services (e.g., Head Start and Even Start). It also allows Title I schools to work with the community to provide health, nutrition, and other social services. The coordination of these services is designed to mitigate the perilous conditions outside the classroom, such as hunger, unsafe living conditions, homelessness, violence, inadequate health care, and child abuse.

Title IV of IASA, *Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities*, calls for comprehensive and community-wide approaches to making schools and neighborhoods safe and drug-free. The program provides funds to governors, state and local educational agencies,

institutions of higher education, and nonprofit groups for planning and implementation of drug and violence prevention school and community programs.

Title XI of IASA, *Coordinated Services*, provides for local educational agencies and schools to develop, implement, or expand a coordinated service project to increase children's and parents' access to social, health, and educational services.

Empowerment Zones and Enterprise Communities

In addition to the legislation cited above, one of the most comprehensive initiatives for coordinated and collaborative approaches to support sustainable, community-based economic and community development efforts is the Empowerment Zone and Enterprise Community (EZ/EC) initiative. Authorized by Congress in 1993, EZ/EC allocates $3.8 billion in tax incentives and social service grants to over 100 areas of pervasive poverty, unemployment, and general distress. Tax-exempt facility bonds, employment credit, and other training and educational incentives were created to benefit organizations in the designated regions. Employers of youth under the age of 19 are also eligible to receive credit for youth training programs operated in conjunction with education officials.

In establishing specific guidelines for the creation of 95 Enterprise Communities, 6 Empowerment Zones, and 3 supplemental Empowerment Zones, the EZ/EC initiative mandates that potential recipients of a grant develop a detailed plan for the coordination of community, economic, facility, and human resources. The proposal must describe the development of a strategic plan and the degree of involvement of community and local organizations, and identify potential partnerships with both public and private organizations (e.g., schools, health care providers, businesses) and a system for measuring the success of the plan, including an explanation of methodology and benchmarking.

The above-cited legislation and federal initiatives have the potential to significantly advance the nation's capacity for the healthy development and learning success of the increasingly diverse student population. The examples described above have two focuses in common that are relevant to children in at-risk circumstances. Each law focuses on creating a positive climate that supports learning. For example, Goals 2000 sets high academic standards for all students, Goals 2000 and IASA promote safe and drug free educational environments, and the EZ/EC initiative provides support for local communities and businesses to revitalize the social, economic, and educational environments in which children live and learn.

Each law also emphasizes the value of school-family-community partnerships as a means of creating the positive climate needed to optimize children's learning. Goals 2000 and IASA both encourage parental involvement in the schools. IASA and EZ/EC encourage the formation of partnerships among schools, families, and communities to develop and implement the programs they fund, to assure that all contexts in which children and families live and learn are represented, and to take responsibility for the development of school-family-community learning environments that promote learning and educational resilience. Furthermore, by working collaboratively with one another, the benefits of each partner's resources can be maximized.

Forging School-Family-Community Connections for Student Success

There has been a proliferation of programs designed to improve the lives of children at risk (cf. Berhman, 1992; Levy & Shepardson, 1992; Rigsby et al., 1995; U.S. Department of Education, 1996). Some of these programs were prompted by national policies, whereas others grew out of grassroots movements (Center for the Study of Social Policy, 1995). Collaborative school-linked services programs can help guarantee the educational accomplishment of children by providing access to medical, psychological, economic, and educational resources in coordinated and accessible ways. However, the research base shows that these services by themselves are insufficient for achieving academic success (Driscoll, Boyd, & Crowson, 1996; Wang, et al., 1994).

There is no single model for the delivery of collaborative school-linked services (Levy & Shepardson, 1992). Current collaborative programs include those directed at parents of young children, pregnant teenagers and teenage parents, dropouts, homeless children, and alcohol and drug abusers. Many new programs have emerged from the needs of children and families in local communities (Benard, 1992; Driscoll et al., 1996; Holtzman, 1994; U.S. Department of Education, 1995). Collaborative school-linked services can be described in terms of their goals, the services offered, the location of services, and the service providers.

Table 3 shows the key features of the six most frequently targeted program areas for school-linked services for children and youth. For each of the six program areas (Parent Education and School Readiness; Teen Pregnancy Prevention and Parenting; Dropout Prevention; Chemical Dependency Abuse and Prevention; Integrated Services; and Parent Involvement) the at-risk context, collaborators, and curriculum-based versus service orientation are reported.

At-Risk Contexts. Many collaborative school-linked programs are targeted for urban, low-achieving, economically and socially disadvantaged children and youth and their families. However, the Dropout Prevention, Teen Pregnancy, and Chemical Dependency program areas are targeted for all students.

Goals. Parent Education and School Readiness, Teen Pregnancy Prevention and Parenting, Dropout Prevention, and Parent Involvement programs all focus resources on improving students' academic achievement. In addition, many of these programs focus on parental competencies, family literacy, and child development and the provision of health services. Such programs as Teen Pregnancy Prevention and Parenting and Chemical Dependency have particular goals associated with the program's special emphasis (for example, birth control, alcohol addiction, and drug dependency).

Collaborators. Across all program areas, the most typical collaborators include schools, families, and social and health care workers. A supportive but less central role has been played by universities, private foundations, religious institutions, the media, law enforcement, and the business community. In the area of Chemical Dependency Abuse and Prevention, peers have played a key role in modeling refusal and coping skills, and in distributing current information on alcohol and drug abuse and prevention.

Curriculum Versus Service Orientation. In most collaborative school-linked programs, both curriculum and services are offered as part of the programmatic intervention. Parent Involvement programs are the exception, relying primarily on curricular interventions. The curriculum presented in most collaborative programs provides knowledge and new skills in the program's area of emphasis. Services typically include health care, transportation to appointments, and counseling.

Implementation of School-Family-Community Programs

During the past five years, community members, educators, and other service providers began many school-home-community programs. Some of these programs established school-linked, comprehensive service delivery systems, while others adopted school-based, co-located, comprehensive services. Still others were designed to make community-based learning environments and resources, such as libraries, museums, and recreational facilities, available to children and families. Programs invited family involvement and regarded the family as a full partner necessary to the fulfillment of program goals. Regardless of their design, these programs harnessed the resources of school, family, and community to achieve their ends.

Despite intense interest and wide implementation, little is known about the effectiveness of school-family-community programs. Few rigorous research results exist. Knapp (1994) identified several evaluations of statewide initiatives (State Reorganization Commission, 1989; Wagner, Golan, Shower, Newman, Wechsler, and Kelley, 1994) and a multiple program comparison study (Marzke, Chimerine, Morrill, & Marks, 1992). However, case studies, single project evaluations, and descriptions of demonstration projects comprise much of the extant knowledge base (Arvey & Tijerina, 1995; Mickelson, Yon, & Carlton-LaNey, 1995; Zetlin, Ramos, & Valdez, in press). One of the more rigorous and compelling studies of collaborative program effects is the five-year, multisite evaluation of the New Futures program (Center for the Study of Social Policy, 1995), which showed very little effect.

Guidelines for Successful Implementation

Guidelines for successful implementation were identified based on results from recent evaluations of collaborative programs and findings from a quantitative synthesis and a qualitative analysis of collaborative programs (Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1995). Five categories of these imperatives include: (a) planning for implementation, (b) focusing on the client, (c) promoting interprofessional collaboration, (d) allocating and deploying resources, and (e) implementing research-based instructional practices.

The planning process is of paramount importance for successfully implementing collaborative programs. The process must include key stakeholders and be of sufficient duration to permit the development of a shared vision and the establishment of a "new culture." The main focus of collaborative programs must be on the client. Management, administrative, and governance issues must be addressed without losing sight of the ultimate goal of serving clients' multiple needs. Facilitating the collaboration requires opportunities for interaction among collaborators, clearly defined roles, and formal policies and procedures for program operation. Stable collaborative operations depend on availability of space and resources, technical assistance to collaborators, and sufficient long-term funding.

When these prior conditions for collaborative planning and operations are met, the stage is set for the implementation of powerful, research-based instructional practices within the classroom and school. Research has shown that when collaboratives are established, school governance changes. However, changes in school governance do not necessarily impact core instructional practices. Many times schools involved in collaboratives merely add on programs, rather than instituting systemic change in the delivery of instruction.

The Community for Learning Program: Prospects for a Comprehensive Approach to Coordinated Educational and Related Services Delivery

The desire to increase the opportunities for educational and lifetime success of children and families in inner-city communities sparked the design of the Community for Learning program (CFL) (Wang, Oates, & Weishew, 1995). This program, developed by the National Center on Education in the Inner Cities as part of a long-term program of research on fostering educational resilience in inner-city communities, was initiated to address the fundamental question, What conditions are required to cause dramatic improvements in the learning of children and youth in the nation's inner cities?

Figure 2 represents the basic design of CFL, and identifies and relates the goals, design elements, and learning environments that comprise the program. The goals of CFL are operationalized in site-based program design elements within a variety of learning environments, including the school, the family, and the community. CFL provides a framework for designing interventions based on site-specific needs and capacity. The framework also demonstrates a collaborative process that unites various groups and resources in school restructuring efforts. The Community for Learning program strengthens the school's capacity to mobilize and redeploy community and school and encourages coordinated, inclusive service delivery. Unlike many earlier collaborative programs, however, CFL positions curriculum, instruction, classroom management, and school organization as central design elements of implementation. A basic premise of CFL is that to fully realize the potential for schooling success of students faced with multiple, co-occurring risks, attention must also be directed at the way core instruction is delivered in classrooms/schools. Without a focus on establishing productive learning environments in the classroom and school, via powerful instruction, rigorous and meaningful curricula, and supportive schoolwide practices, reform efforts to support student learning will continue to fall short of their long-range visions.

In the Community for Learning program, comprehensive reform of service delivery goes beyond involving the school in a new governance structure to administer interagency activities by focusing on implementing resilience-promoting practices and policies, especially effective instructional practices, to improve delivery and student learning.

Key Program Components

The Community for Learning program consists of seven major components, focusing on (a) the learning needs of students, (b) the organizational and administrative support requirements

needed to achieve program implementation, and (c) the staff development needs of school personnel and related service providers. Of these seven components, five address the education concerns and two focus on service delivery. The components are listed below:

- A site-specific implementation plan that takes into account the school's program improvement needs, students' learning characteristics and needs, staff expertise and staffing patterns, curriculum standards, instruction, and assessments, and other implementation-related concerns.
- A schoolwide organizational structure that employs teaming of regular and specialist teachers in the planning and delivery of instruction in the regular classroom setting.
- A staff development plan, based on a needs assessment, that provides ongoing training and technical assistance tailored to the needs of individual staff members and program implementation requirements.
- An instructional learning management system with a focus on student self-responsibility.
- An integrated assessment-instruction process that provides an individualized learning plan for each student, using multiple approaches such as whole-class and small-group instruction, as well as one-on-one tutoring, based on an ongoing analysis of student needs, resources, and expediency.
- A school-family-community involvement plan to enhance communication among partners and to forge a partnership of equal responsibility that promotes schooling success.
- A school-linked, comprehensive, coordinated health and human services delivery plan that addresses the wellness, healthy development, and learning success of each student.

Program Impact

The Community for Learning program influences school practices and expectations by stressing the use of research-based instructional practices that are linked to positive student academic and social outcomes and encouraging teachers to hold high academic and social expectations for all students. Results from recent implementation studies in several inner cities show a positive pattern of achievement, with CFL students outperforming comparison students in both reading and mathematics. Other findings include CFL students demonstrating more positive attitudes toward their learning and their classroom and school environment when

compared with students from non-program schools. CFL students, compared to other students, also perceive their teachers as providing more constructive feedback about their work and behavior; hold higher levels of aspiration for their own academic learning; have better academic self-concepts; and have clearer understandings of rules for behaviors and class/school operations. In a follow-up study, 11th-grade students who had participated in the Community for Learning program in middle school showed a significantly lower dropout rate (19%) compared to their peers (60%) enrolled in the same high school. The data also revealed that CFL families and communities become more active in a range of school activities and participate more in school decision-making. Among the major outcomes of CFL is a capacity-building process for school restructuring. This process has been shown to strengthen, mobilize, and redeploy school, family, and community resources in implementing a coordinated system of education and related service delivery.

The Community for Learning program provides a powerful instructional program that draws on multiple learning environments and is supported by a comprehensive services delivery system. Although students' academic accomplishments are central to the program's success, school, family, and community resources are also invested in meeting a variety of other goals. As a site-based program, it is sensitive to the needs and preferences of students, the local neighborhood, and the school staff. It employs a program of staff development that is data-driven, as opposed to a staff development program that upgrades teachers' skills using discrete workshops with limited relevance to teachers' needs. Instruction in the Community for Learning program relies on research-based, effective practices. Most importantly, it provides for collaboration among parents, community members, and teachers in harnessing resources to promote educational resilience and student learning.

Discussion and Conclusions

As Census data from the 1990s showed the United States leading the industrialized world in terms of children living in poverty, the nation's attention was drawn to the plight of children and families in a variety of risk circumstances, particularly high-risk circumstances in this nation's inner cities. The quality of life available to these children and families is threatened by poverty, lack of employment opportunities, disorderly and stressful environments, poor health care, children born to children, and highly fragmented patterns of service.

Many students in these circumstances have difficulty achieving learning success and need better help than they are now receiving. If they are to successfully complete a basic

education through equal access to a common curriculum, the way schools respond to the diversity of student needs must undergo major conceptual and structural changes. Meeting the needs of the increasingly diverse, economically and educationally disadvantaged urban children and youth requires comprehensive reform of service delivery, including the most powerful educational interventions possible. The situation in inner-city education is seen as a current and general crisis, one of great significance to the future of American education. Inner-city schools and communities are not thriving, and in many cases children's life opportunities are being lost. Decades of interventions in inner cities have not worked.

Broad systemic reform is required. Resources must be gathered from the community—public and private agencies, local and state health and human services departments, and businesses and religious institutions—and coordinated with the resources available in schools. Narrow plans that reform a school's instructional program alone will not solve these problems. Improvement efforts must take into consideration the learning context, requiring collaboration and coordination among professionals on a scale never previously attempted. Despite the crisis in urban centers, there are myriad resources in families and communities that can be united with schools to rekindle hope and revitalize communities' commitment to ensuring healthy development and learning success of its young. One thing is certain: human development and education must be at the center of any hope for sustainable community development and economic recovery in urban America.

Several policy and practical implications can be drawn from current attempts to institute broad-based efforts to significantly improve the healthy development and learning success of inner-city children and youth. First, program implementation must be a shared responsibility of all stakeholder groups at the grassroots level to address the multiple co-occurring risks prevalent in the lives and learning of many inner-city children and youth who are placed further at risk by the inadequate education they receive. However, schools must be the primary focus as we attempt to find ways to improve the capacity for education in the inner cities.

Secondly, innovative programs evolve in stages of development, growth, and change. Procedures found useful in one city can be helpful in initiating similar programs elsewhere. Although impressive advances have been demonstrated in the delivery of school-linked comprehensive programs, much attention must be paid to charting a course of action to bring to scale what works in the unique situations of the initial implementation sites. Strong efforts are needed to provide support for forums to share ideas on solutions to thorny problems, to identify promising practices, to analyze how programs are implemented, and to evaluate outcomes. This

is yet another level of collaboration, currently lacking, that would surely contribute to sustained improvements.

Finally, few educational reforms have generated the same level of ground-swelling support as the comprehensive approach to coordinated educational and related services for children as a focus for achieving significant improvements in student learning. A variety of programs are being created across the country to implement coordinated approaches to reach out to children and youth at greatest risk. Nearly all such programs seek to develop feasible ways to build connecting mechanisms for effective communication, coordinated service delivery, and mobilization of the latent energies and resources of communities. Despite the fact that the implementation of school-community connection programs requires application of knowledge and expertise from many disciplines and professions, no system is in place to communicate and share the growing body of related research findings and innovative development experiences among practitioners and others who play major roles in influencing the conditions and processes of education and health and human services delivery. This lack of access to information about program features, implementation, and evidence of replicable and beneficial effects has been voiced as a major source of concern by field-based education and related services professionals as they enter into groundbreaking collaborative ventures.

To date, educational reform and the reform of services delivery have been on somewhat separate tracks—both in the design of reform efforts and in the forums in which they are discussed. Comprehensive reform of services delivery has often focused on changes in the local governance of service providers, and the improvement of student learning has often remained in the background. In the past, educational reform efforts frequently have failed to incorporate comprehensive, non-educational services into their designs. To ensure the long-lasting impact of collaborative programs, schools and other collaborating agencies must be committed to using powerful instructional techniques as an essential and active component. Efforts to redesign instructional techniques and improve curriculum can no longer rest solely on the mantle of school reform, but must be included in the efforts to strengthen school, family, and community collaboratives.

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Endnotes

[1] 1) All children in America will start school ready to learn. 2) The high school graduation rate will increase to at least 90 percent. 3) All students will leave grades 4, 8, and 12 having demonstrated competency over challenging subject matter including English, mathematics, science, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, the arts, history and geography, and every school in America will ensure that all students learn to use their minds well, so they may be prepared for responsible citizenship, further learning and productive employment in our nation's modern economy. 4) The nation's teaching force will have access to programs for the continued improvement of their professional skills and the opportunity to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to instruct and prepare all American students for the next Century. 5) United States students will be first in the world in mathematics and science achievement. 6) Every American adult will be literate and will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. 7) Every school in the United States will be free from drugs, violence, and the unauthorized presence of firearms and alcohol and will offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning. 8) Every school will promote partnerships that will increase parental involvement and participation in promoting the social, emotional, and academic growth of children (Goals 2000: Educate America Act (1994) PL103-227, Title 1 of Goals 2000, Sec.102).

Table 1

Average Rating of Influences by Context

Context	
Classroom: Instructional Practices	53.3
Home and Community	51.4
Classroom: Curriculum	47.3
Schoolwide Practices	45.1
State and District Policy	35.0

Table 2

Risks and Resilience-Promoting Protective Factors in School, Family, and Community Contexts

Contexts	Risk Factors, Adversities, and Vulnerabilities	Protective Factors That Mitigate Against Educational Failure
The School	Academic underachievement Low expectations for student achievement Few resources Large numbers of students from economically disadvantaged families Inadequate teaching staff Poor leadership Unsafe school Poor instructional quality Use of pullout programs and negative labeling of children with special needs Curricula that is watered down with little higher-level content presented Too little time devoted to instruction	School Environment Instruction • Curriculum articulation and organization • Maximized learning time • Ample opportunities of respond during instruction • High level of student engagement • Student participation in goal-setting, metacognitive and self-regulated learning activities • Cooperative learning techniques • Good classroom management • Frequent and high-quality teacher-student interactions Teacher Expectations and Actions • Role modeling of problem-solving and prosocial behavior • Caring and committed relationships between students and teachers • Promote students self-concept and self-esteem Teacher Expectations and Actions • Holding high expectations for all students • Helping students master new experiences Adapting Curriculum and Instruction to Respond Student Diversity • Teacher sensitivity to students' cultural and intellectual diversity • Adaptation of curriculum content and instructional strategies to ensure student learning

Table 2 (cont.d)

Risks and Resilience-Promoting Protective Factors in School, Family, and Community Contexts

Contexts	Risk Factors, Adversities, and Vulnerabilities	Protective Factors That Mitigate Against Educational Failure
		Adapting Curriculum and Instruction to Respond Student Diversity (con't.) • Use of culturally relevant texts and materials • Overcoming knowledge deficits by teaching prerequisite knowledge • Use of universal themes to make content more accessible • Opportunity to learn advanced content and higher order thinking skills • Provide motivating context for thinking • School Organization • Safe and orderly school atmosphere that rewards student achievement School Organization • Strong leadership by principals • Active parent involvement program • Inclusive classroom and schools • Availability of school-linked, coordinated services • Smaller educational units which create a sense of involvement and belonging Preschool Programs • Participation in preschool program • Encourages a positive orientation toward school and develops competency in the task of schooling

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Table 2 (cont.d)

Risks and Resilience-Promoting Protective Factors in School, Family, and Community Contexts

Contexts	Risk Factors, Adversities, and Vulnerabilities	Protective Factors That Mitigate Against Educational Failure
		Peer Support • Presence of support and caring by peers to students facing successful life circumstances • Positive attitudes of peers toward productive educational tasks • Use of cooperative learning programs, mentoring, cross-age tutoring, use of small learning groups, and extra-curricular activities.
The Family	Perinatal stress Malnutrition Poverty Toxic environment Unemployment Chronic physical and mental illness Divorce/family dissolution Limited parental education Frequent moves Child maltreatment (severe neglect, abuse) Limited transportation Little or no health care Poor parenting skills Poor communication skills Family conflicts Child abuse	**Family Environment** Stable and orderly family environment • At least one strong relationship with an adult (not always parent) • Absence of discord • Family warmth • Family cohesion • Child performs chores to help family • Family nurtures physical growth • Family provides information • Family provides learning opportunities • Family behavioral models • Family provides connections to other resources • Family nurtures self-esteem, self-efficacy • Family nurtures mastery innovation • Family holds high academic expectations for children

Table 2 (cont.d)

Risks and Resilience-Promoting Protective Factors in School, Family, and Community Contexts

Contexts	Risk Factors, Adversities, and Vulnerabilities	Protective Factors That Mitigate Against Educational Failure
	Spouse abuse Substance abuse	Stable and orderly family environment (con't.) • Family involvement in programs and courses that advance their skills
The Community	High crime rate High unemployment rate Substance abuse High rate of teenage pregnancy Few community services Fragmented community services Barriers to services (language, eligibility, cost, transportation) Unsafe neighborhood	**Community Environment** Students' Personal Attributes • (e.g., good health, intelligence, good problem-solving skills, verbal fluency, sense of humor, malleability, interest in novel situations, high activity) Availability of Resources • Access to a variety of human services, including medical, psychological, legal, social, financial, and transportation • Prevention-oriented, school-linked integrated services addressing multiple needs • Opportunities for children and youth to participate in meaningful community activities Community Culture • An emphasis on public safety • Consistent, frequently expressed prosocial norms and values

Table 3

Key Features of Six Program Areas

Program Area	At-Risk Context	Goals	Collaborators	Curriculum Versus Service Orientation
Parent Education and School Readiness (8 sources; 18 programs reviewed)	Uneducated, low-income families with young children often in urban areas; teenage parents.	Parental competencies; family literacy; children's academic achievement; provision of health and social services.	Social and health care workers, schools, private foundations.	Both--(a) curriculum includes child development, child-rearing practices, and parental self-help; (b) services include home visits by nurses and social workers, transportation to appointments, counseling, health screenings.
Teen Pregnancy Prevention and Parenting (5 sources, 7 programs reviewed)	First-time, unmarried, low-income, pregnant teenagers; a few designed for ethnic minorities in urban areas.	Pregnancy prevention: provide information about birth control, sex, and pregnancy to prevent pregnancy; provide contraceptives. Teenage parenting: provide knowledge about pregnancy, birth control, child development, and parenting skills; promote completion of mother's high school education; promote employability and job skills for mothers.	Schools, home nurses, Planned Parenthood; other health and human service agencies; obstetricians, midwives, pediatricians, and nutritionists; university medical schools.	Pregnancy prevention programs: Both--(a) curriculum includes information on birth control, sexuality, and family life education; (b) services include counseling, medical exams, and contraceptives. Teenage parenting: Both--(a) curriculum includes information on birth control, sexuality, child care, and health education, prenatal care, job training; (b) services include prenatal care, transit to appointments, nurse home visitations, parenting programs.

Table 3 (cont.d)

Key Features of Six Program Areas

Program Area	At-Risk Context	Goals	Collaborators	Curriculum Versus Service Orientation
Dropout Prevention (8 sources; 25 programs reviewed)	High school students often in urban areas, with histories of high absenteeism and course failure; also students not able to conform to school expectations; sometimes students involved in criminal activity, chemical dependency, or teenage pregnancy.	Increase student attendance; reduce dropping out; identify and contact truant students; increase students' academic performance; increase probability of students' attending college or entering job market.	Schools; parents; juvenile justice departments; businesses; social services; and occasionally universities and colleges.	Both--(a) curriculum includes remedial basic skills and vocational educational programs; (b) services include counseling, mentoring, health services, phone calls for absenteeism, preparation for GED, and coordination of Job Training Partnerships Act.
Chemical Dependency Abuse and Prevention (8 sources; 171 programs reviewed)	All students; some designed especially for urban minorities; Native Americans and children of alcoholics.	Reduce consumption of alcohol and drugs; increase knowledge about alcohol and drugs; promote coping skills against pressure to abuse substances; teach responsible drinking habits; develop self-esteem.	Peers; schools; community and social agencies; media; counselors; health care workers; police and businesses.	Both--(a) curriculum includes information on alcohol and drugs; social and decision-making skills; (b) services include peer and other counseling, alcohol- and drug-free activities, and support groups.
Integrated Services (6 sources; 6 programs reviewed)	Wide range urban and rural students; delinquent children; children from dysfunctional families; urban minorities; low-achieving youth.	Coordinate services (often coordinating services is an intermediate goal toward ends such as lowering dropout rates); often a single program encompasses multiple goals.	Schools; universities; businesses; state and local governments; foundations and nonprofit agencies; health and mental health care providers; community and religious institutions; parents; peers.	Both--(a) curriculum develops a variety of knowledge and skills; (b) services include vocational counseling, health care, health and mental health, services, and case management.

Table 3 (cont.d)

Key Features of Six Program Areas

Program Area	At-Risk Context	Goals	Collaborators	Curriculum Versus Service Orientation
Parent Involvement (8 sources; over 240 programs reviewed)	Families of children from preschool to high school, frequently urban, economically, and socially disadvantaged families.	Foster greater parental concern for children's educational achievement; improve academic achievement; encourage greater parent involvement in children's education; create more intellectually stimulating home environment; foster close family relationships.	Schools; parents; mental health providers; businesses; media; universities.	Primarily curriculum--parenting skills, child development information.

Table 4

Guidelines for Successful Implementation of School-Home-Community Programs

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Planning for Implementation

- include key stakeholders in planning;
- identify the primary purpose of the coordinated service program and its goals;
- develop a "shared vision" that is facilitated by a lengthy planning period;
- identify clientele (e.g., universal coverage, children and families in at-risk circumstances, only children enroll in the school and their families, all children and families in the schools' neighborhood);
- establish a "new" culture that evolves as problems are and needs are identified in the local site-not a "top-down" mandate;
- receive support from top levels of educational and agency hierarchies;
- disallow any one agency, or the school, from dominating the collaborating partners;

Focusing on the Client

- focus on clients' multiple, co-occurring risks;
- demonstrate sensitivity to the clients' cultural backgrounds;
- use case management procedures;
- resolve issues of client confidentiality, so that cooperating agencies and the school can share client and family data when necessary;
- use confidentiality waivers;

Promoting Interprofessional Collaboration

- provide frequent opportunities for collaborators to interact;
- clarify the evolving roles of teachers, school administrators, and members of the interdisciplinary team to reduce inter-professional conflicts;
- prepare formal interagency agreements, or educational policy trust agreements to help negotiate new roles among the interprofessional team;
- share the management of collaborative operations;
- establish common eligibility criteria for clients among the collaborating agencies;
- establish guidelines for shared data collection;

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Table 4 (cont.d)

Guidelines for Successful Implementation of School-Home-Community Programs

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Allocating and Deploying Resources

- provide adequate space and resources for program operation;
- provide technical assistance to collaborators;
- identify funding sources that provide stability during the implementation phase and sufficient resources to foster real change;

Implementing Powerful, Research-Based Instructional Practices

- promote changes in core instructional practices in the classroom, do not rely only upon "add-on" programs to improve the delivery of educational services;
- provide school personnel with information and training on effective instructional and organizational practices;
- provide for monitoring to assure faithful implementation of any improvement effort;
- establish and assess intermediate benchmarks of successful implementation (e.g., new instructional practices being implemented appropriately, student are fully engaged in the modified instructional program);
- engage in the process of continuous of assessment and refinement of the newly implemented program to assure that it is meeting the needs of the students.

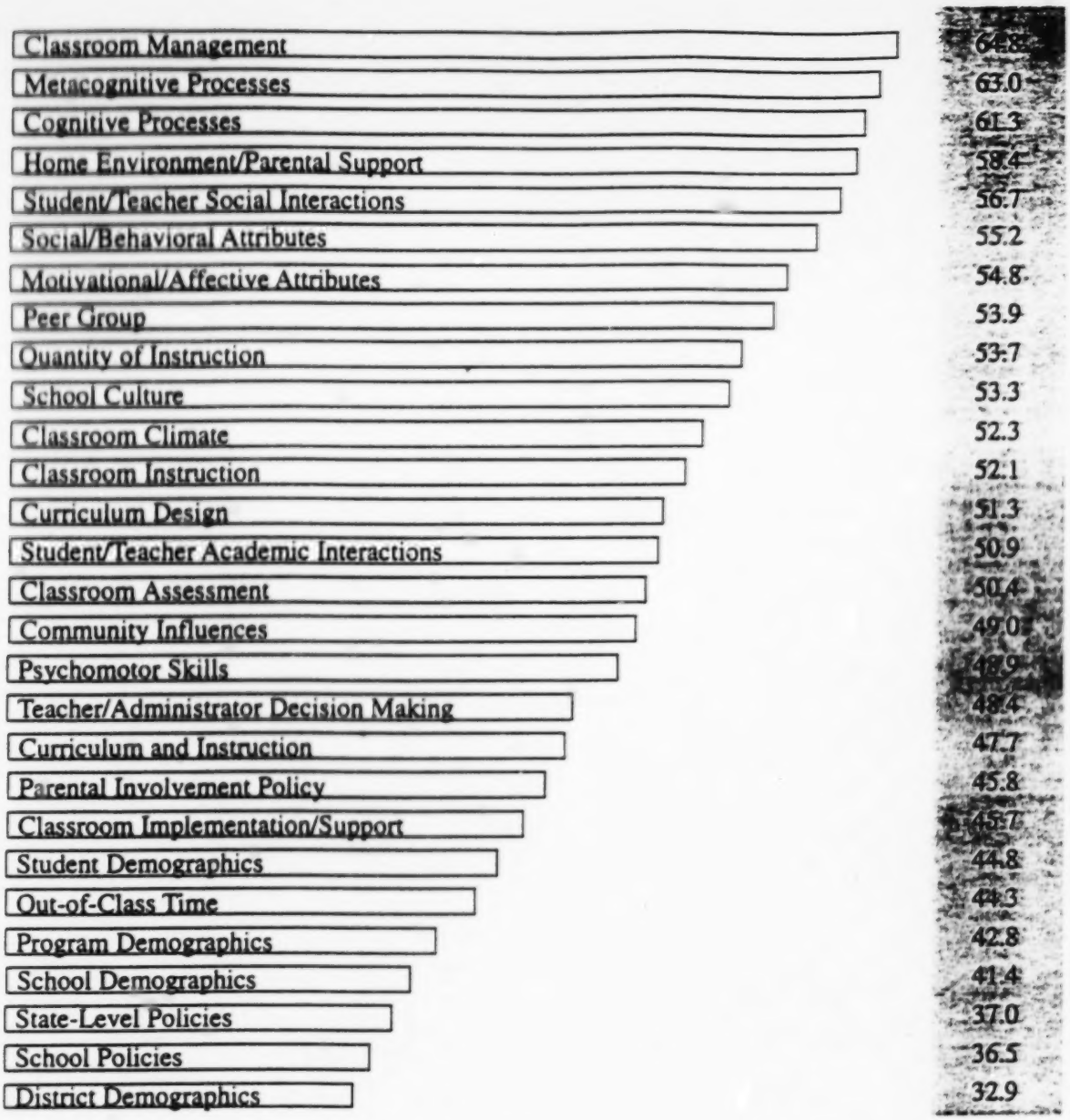

Figure 1. Relative Influences on Learning.

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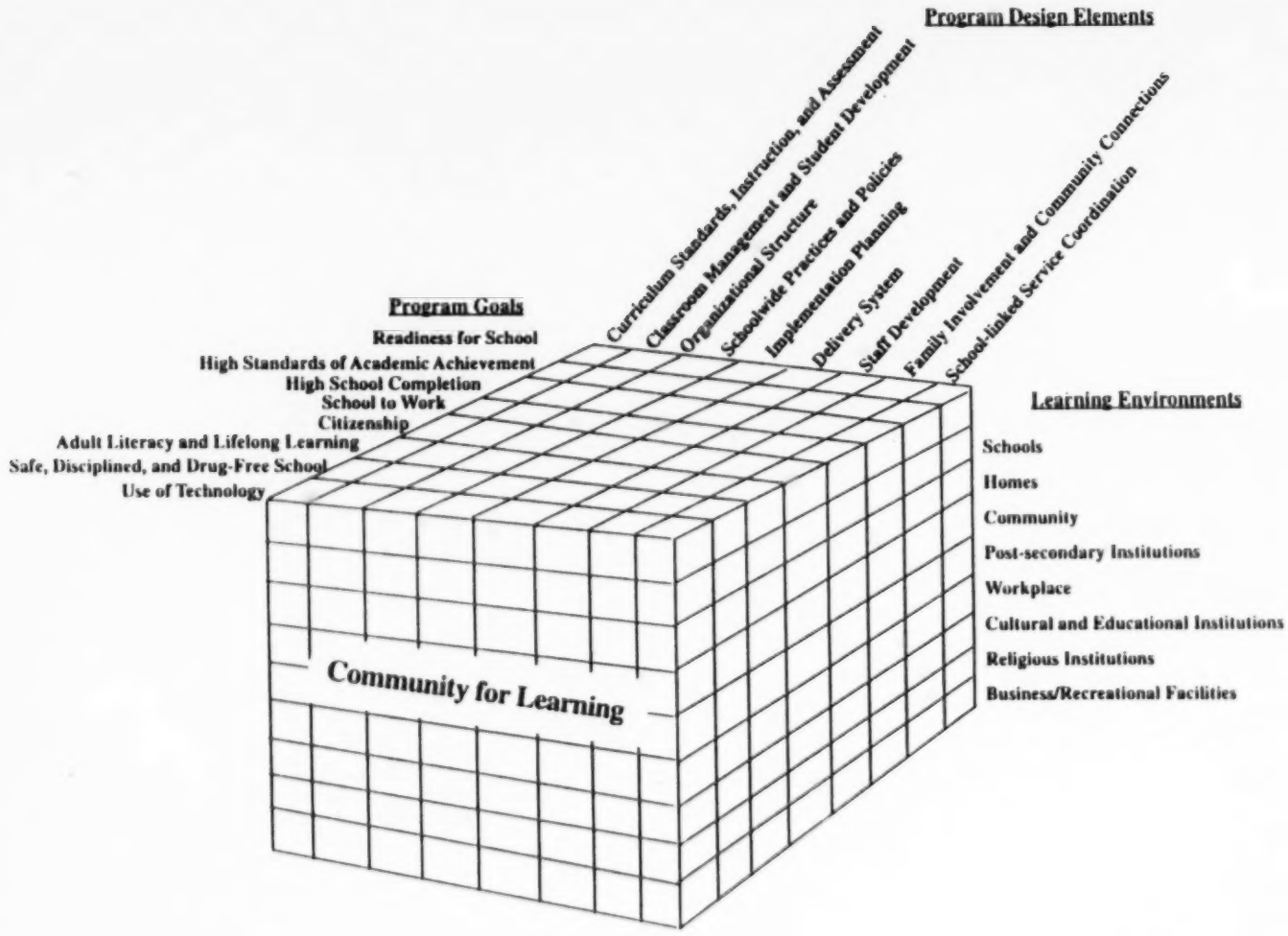

Figure 2. Program Goals, Design Elements, and Learning Environments of the Community for Learning Program.

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The Laboratory for Student Success

The Laboratory for Student Success (LSS) is one of ten regional educational laboratories in the nation funded by the U.S. Department of Education to revitalize and reform educational practice in the service of children and youth.

The mission of the Laboratory for Student Success is to strengthen the capacity of the mid-Atlantic region to enact and sustain lasting systemic educational reform through collaborative programs of applied research and development and services to the field. In particular, the LSS facilitates the transformation of research-based knowledge into useful tools that can be readily integrated into the educational reform process both regionally and nationally. To ensure a high degree of effectiveness, the work of the LSS is continuously refined based on feedback from the field on what is working and what is needed in improving educational practice.

The ultimate goal of the LSS is the formation of a connected system of schools, parents, community agencies, professional organizations, and institutions of higher education that serves the needs of all students and is linked with a high-tech national system for information exchange. In particular, the aim is to bring researchers and research-based knowledge into synergistic coordination with other efforts for educational improvement led by field-based professionals.

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